

# LIBRARY SERVICE TO LABOR

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## EVERYONE IS AFRAID

By Muriel E. Perry\*

Anyone who has been watching the American scene these past twenty years must be aware of a great change that has been creeping over our people. And a thoughtful observer can identify the end result of that change. For the first time in our lives Americans are afraid. They are afraid of Russia, of the H-Bomb, of a depression. Democrats are afraid of Republicans, Republicans of Democrats, Labor of Management, and Management of Labor. Everyone is afraid of McCarthy.

It's a mighty far cry from the days when fear was an unknown factor in these United States, when at the drop of a hat a man (and his womenfolk) would turn his back on comfort and security and push westward into the unknown. Today we speak of "the simple life" of those early Americans. Yet redskins on the warpath and wrestling a bare living off land not always kind could not have been entirely simple.

The pioneers who flushed their way across this continent were not only physically courageous they were also morally and intellectually independent. What they didn't know they learned the hard way. Confronted by difficulties, whether redskins or plagues, they "figgered" their way out. The same process might serve us today with the Russians and depressions if enough people were willing to think. But thinking is hard work. Most people don't like it. And conformity of thought is dwarfing American mental vitality.

It is odd that with few and unreliable methods of communication the American of two hundred years ago held "book larnin' " in high regard and that native ability and vigorous intellectuality flourished with the spreading settlements. Today, with our great wealth of communication mediums, we as a nation are becoming mentally stereotyped.

\*This is a talk given by the librarian of the Decatur (Illinois) Public Library at the AFL Auto Workers Educational Conference (Eighth Region) **HEADQUARTERS** is reproduced here as an example of one way a librarian can approach organized labor with the message of library service.

SEP 14 1954

AMERICAN LIBRARY

If enough people would only take a little time to find out why Russians tick and why Communism looks better than Democracy to some other countries, they would fear Russians and Communism less. They would also learn how better to combat the present threat to Democracy. If enough people would study the whys and wherefores of depressions, we could certainly avoid them, for the basic reasons can be read in any history. If Labor would take a little time out to understand the problems of Management and if Management would return the courtesy to Labor, a common ground of benefit to both and to our country could be found.

We hear a great deal about our privileges as Americans and all too little about our responsibilities. Today each individual and each class must accept the responsibilities that are inherent in American citizenship if our much bragged of way of life is to survive in the present world.

In Decatur there are 7,000 members of this labor union. In a city of this size (67,800) that is an important power block. Each union member with his family, relatives, and friends can wield a tremendous influence for progress or stagnation. There is nothing that cannot be accomplished in politics, health, schools, and any other community need if you decide that it should be done. There is nothing of good that can be done if you decide against it.

With this great power within your hands it is well to consider the sources of information you take as the basis for your personal opinions regarding the problems confronting our community, country, and world.

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#### LIBRARY SERVICE TO LABOR

This newsletter is issued by the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups of the American Library Association, the American Federation of Labor, and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

#### Committee Members

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Ruth Shapiro, Milwaukee Public Library (For the ALA)

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the policy or views of the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups. Contributions of news and articles are welcomed by the editor.

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According to statistics practically everyone in the United States reads one newspaper everyday. Yet we do not know how many read only a particular section (sports, fashions, comics) and ignore the rest. We do not know how many ever read the editorial pages or how they judge the truth or accuracy of what they do read. On questions of world problems and the opinions of foreign nations, most American newspapers are notoriously deficient.

An increasing number of citizens take the radio-television as source material for their personal opinions without a moment's thought as to the accuracy of reporters or commentators. Some of you undoubtedly form your opinions from what the man next to you on the assembly line thinks - especially if he speaks his mind with assurance. Notice how often people use the phrases, "I heard today..." or "They say..." in speaking of contemporary problems. Do you really form your own opinions? Or do you take someone else's for your own without analyzing them?

In all the world there is no other nation in which the citizens have the right to read, think and speak their thoughts as we Americans have. If only each of us would take time to think out both sides of every question, form our own opinions, and fight for them until a better set comes along!

In every community represented here today there are, without doubt, informational resources such as no other people have ever had—your public library. I won't embarrass you by asking how many here have ever visited your public library or, more, how many actually use it.

Within your library are more books and other informational materials than any of you could conceivably own yourself. In the Decatur Public Library, for example, there are over 105,000 volumes, too few, perhaps, for a city of our size but representing hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars.

These materials have been carefully chosen to represent all sides of the problems faced by man. They cover the history, background and culture of almost every nation under the sun. Here you can study the history of Russia and the rise of Communism - its strength and weakness. Here for the asking are the histories of economic depressions, causes, trends and cures from many eras. Here is information on subjects pertaining to labor, management, collective bargaining, negotiations and contracts, laws, and so on ad infinitum.

Much criticism has been leveled at the public library in America for not being aggressive and advertising the services it can provide for its communities. Much of this criticism is well placed. On the other hand there is some defense for libraries. For one thing, the average library today is disastrously understaffed. With personnel too limited for other than basic routines, there is no one with the necessary time for selling library services. All too frequently substandard incomes do not permit the addition of assistants with skills in public relations.

If labor union members accept their responsibilities as thinking American citizens, they can do much to meet the public library half way. The library is there. It belongs to you. You are paying for it. Why not make use of it?

PROGRAM OF WORKSHOPS - ALA CONFERENCE\*  
Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Camps

Chairman, Dorothy Kuhn Oko, The New York Public Library

Monday, June 21, 8:15 a.m.

Presiding: Dorothy Kuhn Oko, The New York Public Library  
MAKING CONTACT WITH UNIONS.

Resource Persons: Francis Henson, United Automobile Workers of  
America, AFL  
John Cosgrove, Textile Works of America, CIO  
Margaret McGuire, Minneapolis Public Library  
And others...

Tuesday, June 22, 8:15 a.m.

Presiding: Ruth Shapiro, Milwaukee Public Library.  
RENDERING SERVICE THROUGH EXISTING LIBRARY DEPARTMENTS.

Resource Persons: Margaret McGuire, Minneapolis Public Library  
Joseph Klimberger, Brooklyn Public Library  
Francis Henson, United Automobile Workers of  
America, AFL  
And others...

Wednesday, June 23, 8:15 a.m.

Presiding: Irwin Sexton, Kansas City Public Library  
BASIC TOOLS, MATERIALS AND RESOURCES.

Resource Persons: Roberta Nelson, Industrial Relations Center,  
University of Minnesota  
Joseph Klimberger, Brooklyn Public Library  
And others...

Thursday, June 24, 8:15 a.m.

Presiding: Karline Brown, Public Library of Cincinnati.  
FILMS -- AN APPROACH TO LABOR.

jointly sponsored with the Audio-Visual Board.

Film: Dues and the Union.

Discussion Leader: Walter Uphoff, Industrial Relations Center,  
University of Minnesota

Resource Persons: George Guernsey, Education Department, Congress of  
Industrial Organizations.

And others...

Friday, June 25, 8:15 a.m.

Presiding: Alice Carter, Free Public Library, Summit, N. J.  
Dorothy Kuhn Oko, The New York Public Library

SERVICE TO BUSINESS AND LABOR GROUPS -- THE COMMON DENOMINATOR?

jointly sponsored with Committee on Relations with Business Groups.

Resource Persons: Irwin Sexton, Kansas City Public Library  
George Guernsey, Education Department, Congress  
of Industrial Organizations  
Dorothy Hagberg, Detroit Public Library  
And others...



#### NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

In order to broaden the base of the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups, the ALA President has appointed the following additional Committee members:

Mr. John Cosgrove, Assistant, Education Department, Textile Workers Union of America, CIO.

Mr. Francis A. Henson, Director, Educational and Political Action Department, United Automobile Workers of America, AFL.

Mrs. Thelma Jackman, Department Librarian, Social Services Department, Los Angeles, California.

Miss Margaret McGurie, Visual Aids Service, Minneapolis Public Library.

Miss Orlie Pell, American Labor Education Service, New York.

Mr. Irwin Sexton, Supervisor of Adult Services, Business and Technical Section, Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library.

#### UNION SUMMER INSTITUTES

The summer is not only vacation time for many officers and members of labor unions, but also school time. Many international unions, state federations, and some local labor bodies conduct summer institutes for their officers, stewards, and rank-and-file members. Some summer institutes are conducted independently by the union, others are held in cooperation with a college or university in the area. Here is a golden opportunity for library service to labor. Librarians should check with local labor leaders (AFL and CIO) to learn of such institutes in their area. A list of AFL institutes, conferences, and summer schools scheduled through August was issued as a supplement to the May issue of the News Letter of the Department of Education, AFL.

#### FILM-A-MONTH PLAN

Workers Education Bureau, AFL, has instituted a new plan whereby films are made available to AFL locals on a reduced rental basis and on a designated date each month. Films are selected a year in advance from a special "Film-a-Month" list or from the Bureau's complete catalog of "Films for Labor." Discussion materials are included with the shipments. Included in the plan are films in the fields of labor, civil rights, economics, government and world affairs.

For further information write: Department of Education, American Federation of Labor, 1625 Eye Street, NW, Washington 6, D.C.

#### LABOR FILMS

A comprehensive description and appraisal of labor union films and their use appears in Sixty Years of 16mm Film, recently published by the Film Council of American (600 Davis Street, Evanston, Illinois). The section on Labor is written by Frank W. McCallister and Sally Parker, both of Roosevelt College. Reprints are available from the Council for 25 cents.